

If an American living overseas wishes to vote in a U.S. election, chances are his or her vote would not be counted. In fact, less than 30 percent of overseas Americans who requested an absentee ballot in 2006 actually received one.

I introduced a bill yesterday that would eliminate overseas voting barriers such as the requirement that voters notarize the envelope with their ballot. The [Overseas Voting Education and Reform, Safeguarding Every American's \(OVERSEAS\) Vote Act](#) (H.R. 4173) would also expand significantly education and outreach to the 6 million or so Americans living outside the United States. Voting is a sacred right that should be available to all American citizens. If there isn't adequate infrastructure to reach out to and educate overseas citizens, let's build one. If people don't know their rights, or get lost in this complicated process, let's help them.

Reform is Needed

A recent [report on voter participation](#) by the Election Assistance Commission (EAC) uncovered some concerning figures for overseas voters.

- Less than 16.5 percent of the estimated 6 million requested a ballot for the 2006 election
- Over 70 percent of those ballots were returned to local elections offices undelivered
- Only 5.5 percent of the 6 million eligible to vote actually cast a ballot
- 23 percent of military and overseas ballots were not counted due to delays

Reforms in my bill

My bill would:

- protect the right to vote of Americans overseas, both military and civilian, by simplifying the voter registration and voting processes
- expand voter education and outreach initiatives
- prohibit states from denying citizens who were born abroad the right to vote just because they never resided in the United States

The legislation has been welcomed by overseas voting organizations such as the Geneva-based [American Citizens Abroad](#) (ACA) and the [Overseas Vote Foundation](#) (OVF),

an organization with offices in Hamburg, Germany and Washington, D.C.

American citizens, whether in San Jose or the Himalayas, deserve the right to participate in our nation's democratic process, and I will work with my colleagues in Congress to pass these much needed reforms.